



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## NOAA Seeks Public Input in Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for a Reef Fish Amendment to Revise Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Catch Allocations

NOAA Fisheries, along with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council), intends to prepare a draft environmental impact statement to outline a range of management alternatives to be considered in Amendment 28 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources in the Gulf of Mexico.

### Background

The current allocation of red snapper between the commercial and recreational sectors is 51:49 percent, respectively. The Council is considering a change in the allocation with the aim of increasing the net benefits from red snapper fishing and increasing the stability of the red snapper component of the reef fish fishery, particularly the recreational sector which has experienced shorter and shorter seasons. The Council has limited the options under consideration to those that would increase the recreational sector's allocation above 49 percent.

Alternatives the Council has developed to date include:

- A "no action" alternative where the current 51 percent commercial to 49 percent recreational allocation remains unchanged.
- Shifting the allocation to the recreational sector from the commercial sector by the amount of 3 percent, 5 percent, or 10 percent.
- Shift either 100 percent or 75 percent of any total combined commercial and recreational quota in excess of 9.12 million pounds (mp) to the recreational sector. The 9.12 mp level was considered a baseline by the Council because it is the total allowable catch the commercial and recreational red snapper quotas were based on prior to a revision in the rebuilding plan implemented in 2007.

NOAA Fisheries and the Council are soliciting comments on the current alternatives or any other alternatives within the scope of the action the public would like the Council to consider.

### Request for Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on the scope of issues no later than December 9, 2013. A copy of the Amendment 28 draft options paper and the Council's action guide are available at [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/gulf\\_fisheries/reef\\_fish/2013/am28/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/gulf_fisheries/reef_fish/2013/am28/index.html). These documents are also available on the Council's Web site at [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).

### How to Submit Comments

You may submit comments to either NOAA Fisheries or to the Council. Written comments on the scope of issues to be addressed by the environmental impact statement must be received by **December 9, 2013**.

*For NOAA Fisheries*, comments on this action, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2013-0146, may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal.\* Go to [www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0146](http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2013-0146), click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only. All comments received will be addressed in the final rule.
- **Mail:** Submit written comments to Peter Hood, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

**Instructions:** Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA Fisheries. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information

submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous).

*For the Council*, comments may be submitted electronically via <http://tinyurl.com/ndzbvny> or click on the Amendment 28 thermometer icon on the Council's website ([www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org)).

\* Note the federal comment submission web site is experiencing temporary technical difficulties. If you are unable to get to the comment page, please try the site at a later date, otherwise you may submit your comments by mail or to the Council.